

# Windom

*Wetland Management District*

## Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment



Comprehensive Conservation Plans provide long-term guidance for management decisions; set forth goals, objectives and strategies needed to accomplish refuge purposes; and, identify the Fish and Wildlife Service's best estimate of future needs. These plans detail program planning levels that are sometimes substantially above current budget allocations and, as such, are primarily for Service strategic planning and program prioritization purposes. The plans do not constitute a commitment for staffing increases, operational and maintenance increases, or funding for future land acquisition.

# Windom

## Wetland Management District

### Comprehensive Conservation Plan Approval U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3

**Submitted by:**

Steve W. Kallin

4/15/03

Steve Kallin  
WMD Manager

Date

**Concur:**

James T. Leach

4-17-03

James T. Leach  
Refuge Supervisor (RFS 3)

Date

Nita M. Fuller

4.17.2003

Nita M. Fuller  
Regional Chief  
National Wildlife Refuge System

Date

**Approve:**

Marvin E. Moriarty

4/17/03

Marvin E. Moriarty  
Acting Regional Director

Date

## **Acknowledgments**

Many organizations, agencies and individuals provided invaluable assistance with the preparation of this Comprehensive Conservation Plan. We gratefully acknowledge the input and support of Tom Larson, Mike Marxen, John Schomaker, Mary Mitchell, Sean Killen, and Jane Hodgins, Planners with the Division of Ascertainment and Planning and all of the dedicated employees of the Wetland Management Districts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Region 3 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is grateful to the many conservation organizations active in western Minnesota for their dedication to the Wetland Management Districts in making them outstanding examples of cooperation and partnership with the many local communities. The Region is equally grateful to every volunteer who contributes time to the programs offered on the Wetland Management Districts. You are truly the backbone of conservation efforts.

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>i</b>
Comprehensive Conservation Planning .....	ii
The Planning Process .....	ii
Management Alternatives .....	iii
Alternatives Development .....	iii
Alternative 1 – Maintain Management on Current Acres With No Additional Land Acquisition ..	v
Alternative 2 – Increase Land Holdings to Goal Acres and Maintain Current Management Practices (No Action) .....	v
Alternative 3 – Increase Land Holdings to Goal Acres and Expand Management for Waterfowl, Other Trust Species and the Public. (Preferred Alternative) .....	vi
Planning Issues and Management Direction .....	viii
Wildlife and Habitat .....	viii
People .....	x
Operations .....	x
Essential Staffing, Mission-Critical Projects and Major Maintenance Needs .....	xi
Essential Staffing Needs .....	xii
Mission-Critical Projects .....	xii
Major Maintenance Projects .....	xii
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview: History of Refuge Establishment, Acquisition, and Management .....	1
Background .....	5
Purpose and Need for the Comprehensive Conservation Plan .....	5
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service .....	5
The National Wildlife Refuge System .....	6
Minnesota Wetland Management Districts Vision Statement .....	6
Legal and Policy Guidance .....	7
Existing Partnerships: The Ecosystem Approach .....	7
Migratory Bird Conservation Initiatives .....	7
Region 3 Fish and Wildlife Resource Conservation Priorities .....	9
Biological Needs Assessment .....	9
Working With Partners .....	10
<b>Chapter 2: Planning Process, Issues and Goals .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Description of Planning Process .....	11
Planning Issues .....	12
Wildlife and Habitat .....	12
Public Use .....	13
Operations .....	13
Comprehensive Conservation Plan Goals .....	14
Wildlife and Habitat .....	14
People .....	14
Operations .....	15

<b>Chapter 3: The Environment .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Geographic/Ecosystem Setting .....	16
Prairie Grasslands .....	16
Deciduous Woods .....	16
Coniferous Forest .....	18
Climate .....	18
Hydrology .....	18
Geology .....	20
District Resources .....	21
Wildlife .....	21
Waterfowl .....	21
Migratory Birds .....	25
Vertebrate and Invertebrate Species of Concern .....	26
Reptiles, Amphibians, and Insects, Vertebrates and Invertebrates .....	26
Listed Endangered and Threatened Vertebrates and Invertebrates .....	27
Threatened Mammals .....	27
Threatened/Endangered Birds .....	27
Reintroductions .....	28
Management of Resident Species .....	28
Habitat .....	28
Wetlands and Riparian Habitat .....	28
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program .....	31
Prairie Restoration .....	32
Rare Communities .....	32
Plant Species of Concern .....	34
Listed Plants .....	34
External Threats .....	34
Drainage and Pesticides .....	34
Invasive Species .....	36
Rural Development .....	36
Cultural Resources .....	36
Archeological and Cultural Values .....	36
Context .....	36
Existing Conditions and Cultural Resources Potential .....	37
Indian Tribes and Other Interested Parties .....	38
Management of Cultural Resources .....	38
People .....	39
Public Use of Waterfowl Production Areas .....	39
Disabled User Access .....	40
Operations .....	41
Individual WPA Development Plans .....	41
Consistent Use .....	41
Drainage .....	44
<b>Chapter 4: Management Direction .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Windom Wetland Management District .....	45
Objectives and Strategies .....	45
Wildlife and Habitat .....	45
Goal 1: Wildlife .....	45
Goal 2: Habitat .....	48
Goal 3: Acquisition .....	53
Goal 4: Monitoring .....	55
Goal 5: Endangered Species / Unique Communities .....	57

People .....	59
Goal 6: Public Use / Environmental Education .....	59
Operations .....	61
Goal 7: Development Plan .....	61
Goal 8: Support Staff, Facilities and Equipment .....	62
Goal 9: Capital Development Funds .....	63
Goal 10: Consistency .....	64
<b>Chapter 5: Plan Implementation .....</b>	<b>65</b>
Essential Staffing, Mission-Critical Projects and Major Maintenance Needs .....	65
Essential Staffing Needs .....	65
Mission-Critical Projects .....	65
Major Maintenance Projects .....	65
Step-down Management Plans .....	67
Partnership Opportunities .....	67
Monitoring and Evaluation .....	68
Appendix A: Authority and Legal Compliance .....	71
Appendix B: Priority Bird Species .....	77
Appendix C: Species List .....	83
Appendix D: National Wetlands Inventory – Minnesota Counties Wetland Types .....	99
Appendix E: Compatibility Determinations .....	103
Appendix F: RONS Lists .....	167
Appendix G: Existing Partnerships .....	171
Appendix H: Glossary .....	177
Appendix I: Bibliography .....	183
Appendix J: List of Preparers .....	189
Appendix K: Guidance for Acquisition .....	193
Appendix L: Goal Acres .....	205
Appendix M: Environmental Assessment .....	209
Appendix N: Drainage Policy .....	309
Appendix O: Disposition of Public Comments on the Draft CCP .....	313

#### **List of Figures:**

Figure 1: Minnesota Wetland Management Districts .....	3
Figure 2: Average Breeding Population for Major Duck Species .....	4
Figure 3: Minnesota Wetland Management District Ecosystems .....	17
Figure 4: Minnesota Wetland Management District Hydrology and Key Rivers .....	19
Figure 5: Estimated Average Duck Pair Density, 1989-1999 .....	22
Figure 6: Predicted Settling Density of Dabbling Duck Pairs .....	24
Figure 7: Wetland Distribution by Type, Windom WMD .....	29
Figure 8: Marsh Vegetation Cycles .....	30
Figure 9: GIS for Waterfowl Production Area Development Planning .....	42
Figure 10: Windom Management District .....	46
Figure 11: Windom Wetland Management District Staffing Chart .....	66